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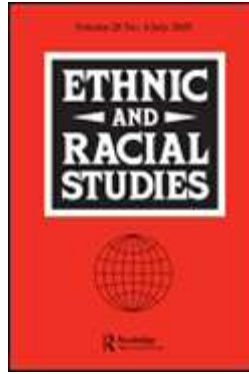
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Imagined Futures: Why business studies dominate the higher education choices of second generation Turks in the Netherlands?

Adél Pásztor

Abstract

Relying on in-depth interviews with higher education students and young graduates the study investigates the factors underpinning the participation patterns of second generation Turks in the Dutch higher education system. The paper highlights how ethnic minority students accommodate the constraints faced by the Dutch educational system by rationalising economics at professional colleges as a suitable alternative to studying medicine at university, an alternative that will meet both their aspirations of a more successful and secure life than their parents' while maintaining the traditional family ties in line with the work-life balance offered by a 'nine-to-five job'.

Keywords: ethnic minority students; higher education access; Netherlands; second generation; subject choice; Turks

The 21st century has seen major transformations in the educational terrain as educational expansion reached the tertiary sector, creating a so called mass system of higher education. Current ethnic minority participation rates are celebrated as a success story of this educational expansion as recent reforms have seen ethnic minority students even more likely than natives to enter tertiary education (e.g. in the UK, US and Germany). Although higher education became more open and accessible to young people from 'non-traditional' backgrounds, persisting inequalities were observed within the institutional hierarchy resulting in continuing reproduction of ethnic (and class) inequalities (Modood and Acland 1998). As Ball, Reay and David (2002, p. 354, emphasis added) rightly suggest, 'the relevant questions about ethnicity and class in relation to higher education are not just about *who goes*, but also who goes *where*, and

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3 why?’
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6 In terms of *where*, ethnic minority participation patterns seem to point towards
7 the existence of an internal system of stratification within the higher education sector
8 (interlinked with the compulsory system of education) which is to ensure that non-
9 traditional students are channelled towards specific institutions. But not only are ethnic
10 minority students enrolled into different *types* of higher education institutions; they also
11 follow different subject choices. In spite of the challenges of accessing higher
12 education, ethnic minority students are overwhelmingly driven to studying medicine,
13 law or IT in a fairly uniform manner across countries (Connor et al. 2001; Boliver 2006;
14 Modood 2006; Kristen, Reimer and Kogan 2008). However, in contrast to the British or
15 the German experience, Turkish students in Holland are choosing business studies in
16 mass numbers while leaving the proportion of those enrolled to study medicine and law
17 relatively low. As the choice of economics seems to be very particular to this group in
18 this particular country, the aim of this paper is to investigate what are the factors behind
19 the second generation Turks’ overrepresentation in the field of business studies. As
20 subject choices are inextricably linked to institutional choices in the Dutch educational
21 setting one cannot explain the ‘why’ without looking into the accessibility of certain
22 options for a non-traditional student body.
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48 **Access to higher education for non-traditional students. International overview**

49 National educational systems play a significant role in determining whether one can
50 reach the top of the educational ladder. In stratified educational systems (Allmendinger
51 1989), such as the German and the Dutch, for example, tracking takes place at the
52 beginning of compulsory schooling; whereas in more comprehensive systems (e.g. UK)
53 selection takes place much closer to the entry to tertiary education. But how do these
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1
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3 differences translate into the differing patterns of higher education participation for
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5 ethnic minority students?
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8 Even after the formal abolition of the binary divide in the British higher
9
10 education system, the uneven distribution of the student body pointed at persisting
11
12 inequalities within the sector. While in the UK context of comprehensive education
13
14 students can 'theoretically' apply to any higher education institution, their practical
15
16 chances of enrolment can be very restricted. Access here is subject to prior scholastic
17
18 achievement often identified by the so called 'A levels', which together with silent
19
20 factors (such as the type of secondary school attended and the cultural and social capital
21
22 of parents) play a significant role in shaping higher education access. High tuition fees
23
24 and the selective nature of university admissions, together with institutional racism at
25
26 the most prestigious institutions often result in low rates of ethnic minority
27
28 participation. The undying image of the typical university student as a white middle
29
30 class male at top institutions also leads to students' self-selection. As many ethnic
31
32 minority students voice their concerns over 'not fitting in' and losing their 'authenticity'
33
34 at high ranking universities (Bird 1996; Reay et al. 2001; Reay, David and Ball 2005)
35
36 they end up opting for the post-1992 institutions (former polytechnics), instead of the
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38 older, long established universities (Reay et al. 2001; Connor et al. 2003; 2004; Reay,
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40 David and Ball 2005; Modood 2006).
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48 By contrast in countries where tracking is an integral part of schooling,
49
50 educational systems channel students into different school types envisaging full, limited
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52 or no access to higher education early on. In these contexts it is often observed that
53
54 immigrant children do not do particularly well during compulsory schooling and are
55
56 often penalised by their language difficulties, teacher racism and/or the lack of cultural
57
58 capital and so are channelled to the least selective school types (Kristen, Reimer and
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3 Kogan 2008; Pásztor 2009).

4
5 Within the Dutch context, strong channelling is built into the system, directing
6 pupils through certain routes after the first selection point which takes place at the age
7 of ten. Higher education cannot be viewed as completely open given that direct access
8 to universities is granted only to a limited few who attended the most selective type of
9 secondary schools (i.e. VWO/gymnasium). The rest of the students have access to the
10 'second tier' of higher education, namely professional colleges, with the option of
11 continuing into university level subsequently. Thus tracking is the main reason why the
12 proportion of second generation Turks is relatively low at university level whereas they
13 are well represented in professional colleges within the Dutch higher education system.
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27 Within the German setting, tracking takes place during compulsory schooling in
28 similar manner to the Netherlands. However, once the necessary secondary school
29 certificates are obtained, ethnic minority students find the doors of all types of higher
30 education institutions open to them. As a result of this there is a growing proportion of
31 Turkish students within the German higher education system who enrol into universities
32 instead of the 'Fachhochschulen'. The latter are seen as institutions with a rank far
33 behind the prestige of the university as university degrees rank the highest among all
34 institutions back in Turkey (Kristen, Reimer and Kogan 2008).
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46 Considering the hierarchical structure of the higher education sector across
47 countries allows us to contextualise the higher education choices of ethnic minority
48 students within an international perspective. Although the massification of higher
49 education opened up the access to a non-traditional student body, higher education
50 sectors successfully managed to retain their exclusivity by opening up avenues to the
51 least prestigious institutions only (e.g. in Holland and the UK). The binary system of
52 higher education operating in many developed countries provided a well established
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3 avenue for channelling ethnic minority students into qualitatively different types of
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5 higher education institutions equipping them with different and separate experiences
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7 and economic returns (Reay et al. 2001). But even where higher education institutions
8
9 maintained the illusion of open access (as in Germany), they were resting assured that
10
11 successful enrolment would not necessarily ensure successful completion. Ethnic
12
13 minority students arriving from academically less strong schools are at risk of dropping
14
15 out long before graduation; thus the apparently different educational systems uniformly
16
17 achieve social reproduction.
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22 In the following I will focus on the specific case of Turkish students within the
23
24 Dutch educational system in order to demonstrate the effects of institutional access on
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26 subject choices.
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31 **The Dutch higher education system**

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33 The Netherlands has a binary system of higher education consisting of (research
34
35 oriented) universities and institutions of professional higher education (HBO¹). While
36
37 universities offer a wide range of disciplines, HBOs prepare students for careers limited
38
39 to certain sectors such as agriculture; engineering; economics; health care; arts; social
40
41 welfare and teacher training (Marginson et al. 2008).
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46 The three tier system based on the Bologna process has been introduced in the
47
48 Dutch higher education from 2002/3. In the new system university students can
49
50 graduate and receive their Bachelor degree within three years. For the same
51
52 qualification HBO students have to study for four years. After the first year of the HBO,
53
54 students can get a certificate called 'propedeuse' which allows them to access university
55
56 courses unless they wish to complete their Bachelor at the HBO level. After gaining
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1
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3 their Bachelor degree, students can choose between HBO and university for their
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5 Master studies.
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8 The initial choice between university and higher professional education is made
9
10 prior to the higher education application as access to the Dutch higher education system
11
12 is conditional upon prior qualifications. While pre-university education (VWO²
13
14 certificate) is strictly required for university enrolment, the enrolment into the HBO is
15
16 open to all students who successfully completed their senior secondary education
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18 (VWO, HAVO or MBO certificate). However, students attending the least selective
19
20 secondary school tracks (such as VBO, MAVO or VMBO in the new system) have no
21
22 direct access to any higher education institution; they have to obtain a certificate from a
23
24 senior secondary education institution first (MBO or HAVO) in order to qualify for
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26 enrolment.
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31 Once the necessary prior qualifications are obtained higher education institutions
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33 are not allowed to pre-select students with regards to their prior scholastic achievement
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35 or potential. Only a few sectors have so called 'numerous fixus', such as medicine and
36
37 dentistry, where the number of enrolled students is set. To all other sectors enrolment is
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39 ensured by application from the side of secondary school leavers, therefore (bearing in
40
41 mind the above outlined limitations) it's up to the student which institution or degree
42
43 programme he or she selects.
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50 **The situation of the Turkish second generation in the Netherlands**

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52 The descendants of Turkish guest workers are considered to be non-traditional students
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54 in the Dutch higher education system given their generally low social class background,
55
56 their ethnic minority status and the low levels of parental human capital (the vast
57
58 majority being the first of their family to enter higher education). Their parents arrived
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1
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3 in Holland as labor migrants during the 1960s and 1970s and were subsequently
4 employed in low skilled jobs requiring little or no prior schooling. Once settled in the
5 Netherlands, it was expected, that their children, the second generation, would do
6 considerably better in terms of labor market participation and educational attainment.
7
8 However, the descendants of Turkish guest workers often found themselves at the
9 bottom end of the educational ladder (Pásztor 2010). While ethnic minority children
10 from the former colonies and other Western European countries gained access to higher
11 education in similar proportion to the native Dutch students (table 1), the children of
12 Turkish guest workers stayed significantly under-represented at higher education level
13 (Wolff and Pásztor 2010). In spite of the positive changes over time recent statistics see
14 less than one third (29 per cent) of ethnic minority youth of Turkish origin (from the 18-
15 20 year old cohort) enrolled into higher education; a figure approximately half of that
16 for natives (54 per cent) (Jennisen 2007). The more prestigious university education
17 accounts for only 16 per cent of the total enrolment as the vast majority of the Turkish
18 second generation is studying at professional colleges instead (table 1).
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46 The preference for HBOs instead of universities is not a *deliberate* choice for
47 ethnic minority students, as prior schooling restricts their access to university education.
48 As many were approaching higher education indirectly, through the so called 'long
49 route' (i.e. climbing up from the least selective secondary school types), professional
50 colleges were the most accessible if not the only, option.
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57 With respect to subject choices, higher education statistics clearly point to
58 second generation Turks' overrepresentation in applied subjects compared to sciences or
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3 humanities. A detailed look at the most popular degree courses points to a single field
4 which markedly outweighs all other subject choices. Economics, business³ and its
5 associated fields are the number one choice of first degree courses for second generation
6 Turks, with an astonishing forty five per cent⁴ choosing this subject (compared to
7 twenty eight per cent of the native Dutch student body) (Jennissen 2007).
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15 As the question of *why* students actually chose this particular field were left
16 largely unexplained, in the following, I will be looking into the aspirations and career
17 choices of these young people bearing in mind the limitations of institutional access.
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22 23 24 **Data and Methodology**

25
26 The study relies on qualitative data which were gathered in the form of in-depth
27 interviews in the city of Amsterdam. Participants were selected from the TIES survey⁵.
28
29 All respondents were second generation Turks aged between twenty and thirty five
30 years, who were born in the Netherlands having at least one parent born in Turkey. The
31 interviewees have been purposefully chosen in order to ensure a balanced sample
32 regarding gender, age, parental education, prior schooling and the type of higher
33 education institution attended. While there was an attempt to reach most respondents
34 who were higher education students or graduates at the time of the survey, sixteen
35 young people agreed to be re-interviewed qualitatively. The interviews ranged from one
36 to two and half hours. They were conducted in English, were fully transcribed and were
37 subsequently analysed in Atlas.ti. The names of the interviewed persons are kept
38 confidential in order to ensure their anonymity.
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54 55 56 57 **Why business studies? Ethnic minority options and choices**

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3 From the question on ‘who goes where, and why?’ the *where* has been discussed above
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5 when pointing to ethnic minority students’ overrepresentation at professional colleges.
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8 While prior tracking is the main factor behind institutional ‘choices’, we still need to
9
10 explain *why* exactly business studies rank first as their subject choice.
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12
13 Heath and his colleagues (Heath, Rethon and Kilpi 2008) in their comprehensive
14
15 review of recent research on the second generation in ten European countries argued
16
17 that the preference for applied subjects is a sign of ‘risk-aversion’ in the educational
18
19 choices of ethnic minority students. However, they also maintained that the preference
20
21 for vocational subjects is a consequence of the discriminatory practices these young
22
23 people expect to face at entry into the labour market thus they limit their choices to
24
25 occupations with relatively high probability of securing employment (Heath, Rethon
26
27 and Kilpi 2008). In addition to this, it has been argued that the study of law and
28
29 medicine would allow Turkish students to take up self-employment within their ethnic
30
31 community thus boosting their employment prospects (Kristen, Reimer and Kogan
32
33 2008).
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39 However, the explanation of discriminatory practices hasn’t been proven by
40
41 previous research in the Dutch context. Tesser and Dronker’s (2007) study showed that
42
43 the chances of being in a particular occupational class were the same for the second
44
45 generation as for their native peers in Holland, with the exception of the salariat which
46
47 remained more closed to ethnic minorities. The current study didn’t find discrimination
48
49 affecting the choices of second generation Turks either, as the interviewed young people
50
51 were not giving voice to such concerns.
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55 One has to be reminded of the fact that these young people had all been
56
57 employed since they were fifteen-sixteen so they had firsthand experience of the Dutch
58
59 labour market. They usually worked in low skilled part-time jobs where discrimination
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3 might have been more overt than at higher levels. While a few indeed recounted such
4 incidents none of them made the connection between these occurrences and the
5 potential for discriminatory practices in later employment. This might be due to the
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11 ‘perceived’ discrepancy between the levels of the jobs they held in comparison to the –
12
13 somewhat idealised – high status of jobs they were aiming to obtain.
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15 This leads us to other possible explanations for second generation Turks striving
16 for high status jobs via careers in economics. Previous research has shown that
17 immigrant parents tend to place great emphasis on obtaining a good education for their
18 children as they themselves were unable to achieve this due to their difficult
19 circumstances (Kao and Tienda 1998; Zhou and Bankston 1998; Brinbaum and Cebolla-
20 Boado 2007; Pásztor 2010,). Correspondingly, Turkish parents expect their children to
21 reach higher than themselves by replacing their unskilled, low paid, manual jobs for
22 significantly better employment prospects: ‘My parents expect me to reach a level
23 where I just don’t have to do hard labour and work late hours and wouldn’t have
24 financial difficulties’ [22, male, university, economics].
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38 ‘I don’t want to see you cleaning buildings or offices, you have to study and you
39 have to get on a high level’ [26, male, HBO, economics]. Understandably, while
40 parents can clearly see a wide range of jobs where they definitely do not want to see
41 their offspring they are much more limited in showing the array of options potentially
42 available to them. The parental drive for qualifications is intertwined with limited
43 knowledge of the Dutch educational system and a lack of knowledge of the job market,
44 thus they often voice unrealistic aspirations for their children.
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56 My father came from Turkey - he didn’t have any education - so he has this idea in his head,
57 when you are a doctor or a lawyer, that are the good jobs you can have, so he wanted us to
58 study high. [27, female, HBO, nursing]
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3 Immigrant parents develop a strongly instrumental view on education where
4
5 extrinsic rewards have the utmost importance when choosing a field. Parents are driven
6
7 by the potential earnings and the high prestige of the profession when they encourage
8
9 their children to pursue a medical career without consulting other options.
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13 Still, when choosing the field, many students have to abandon the parental idea
14
15 of studying medicine due to the effects of early tracking preventing them from
16
17 accessing university courses. Having attended the 'right' secondary school a selected
18
19 few try to meet the parental aspirations and consider the medical profession, but
20
21 discover that becoming a doctor is not the easiest way to get an education: 'To be a
22
23 doctor it's a long, so long way to be. I thought, no, that's not something for me, I do
24
25 something in four years not in eight or ten years. So I chose different way to do
26
27 education' [20, female, HBO, economics]. Thus having considered the costs, benefits
28
29 and the probabilities of success many Turkish students abandon the field of medicine
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31 (Breen and Goldthorpe 1997). Still, the prestige of this field is so deeply rooted in the
32
33 community that it is difficult to go for alternate choices which are often not understood
34
35 or acknowledged.
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42 They [parents] thought that I would study something like doctor. They really appreciate it in
43
44 Turkish culture; they see it as the most excellent job or something. And I had the chance to do
45
46 that, but I didn't, so they thought 'why doesn't she do that?' They were a bit shocked I think.
47
48 [20, female, university, economics]
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50
51 Not choosing medicine must be *explained* somehow to the wider community
52
53 where fitting in is imperative and where acceptance is generally sought. The following
54
55 excerpt clearly illustrates how one mother justifies her son's decision not to study
56
57 medicine illustrating a case of cognitive dissonance reduction⁶. 'My father wanted me to
58
59 become a doctor but my mother – now – thinks it's for the best that I didn't. She heard
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3 there was some doctor in Turkey who wasn't able to rescue someone and then the family
4
5 of the deceased became very angry. "I don't want my son to end up in such a situation",
6
7 my mother said, so it's for the best that I didn't go for medicine' [23, male, university,
8
9 biology].
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12
13 Parental aspirations – based on a stereotyped view of doctors brought over from
14
15 the home country – are resistant to change. But after failing with medicine it is
16
17 economics which comes to the foreground as a plausible choice. 'My mother worked as
18
19 a cleaner at a Dutch bank, and there she saw people in suits, and she wanted all her kids
20
21 to also be like this' [23, male, university, biology]. Economics with the perceived
22
23 attractiveness of working in suits presents a clear contrast to the parental experience of
24
25 hard physical work, late hours and minimum wage. As most interviewees experienced
26
27 economic hardship in their childhood they (and their parents) perceive a job at a bank or
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29 in the government as an appealing alternative to medicine.
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35 The popularity of economics and business studies among ethnic minority
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37 choosers is manifold. To start with, while students are very limited in their ideas for
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39 future jobs (e.g. doctor, lawyer) economics provides an alternative with a great many
40
41 advantages: while it offers good labour market prospects in government, business or
42
43 banking it is accessible at HBO level (doesn't require university education) and is less
44
45 difficult and lengthy than medicine which would push back the time of marriage and
46
47 family formation; a very important factor for second generation Turks.
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51 Needless to say, the students also know what the subject entails. Economics is
52
53 taught within a secondary school curriculum, so for many it is something they know
54
55 about and could imagine studying further: 'I was good at economics so I thought this is
56
57 something for me' [20, female, university, economics]. But studying economics has a
58
59 specific added value as well, it provides something extra even when compared to
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3 medicine: it is simply compatible with the futures they imagined having.
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6 I got discouraged by a person who tells me that [as a doctor] you basically don't have a social
7 life any more. He said you can get paged up for an emergency when you're just playing with
8 your children; I thought no, that's not for me. I value the time I have with my family. [22,
9 male, HBO, economics]
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14
15 In spite of the apparent focus on money and status, and the instrumental
16 approach to studying, second generation Turks are deeply family oriented; not only they
17 are strongly attached to their parents and siblings but they regularly visit their home
18 country and maintain strong ties with their extended family. Thus while getting an
19 education is often defined in terms of material rewards it is frequently overlooked that
20 the money and the 'good job' are not the end but rather the means of 'getting
21 somewhere' for second generation Turks. Getting an education and a good job is just
22 the way in which they can satisfy their needs for material comfort and financial security;
23 other than that they aim for a life fulfilled in their family. The easiest way to a secure
24 and decently paid nine-to-five job in the government, business or bank sector is through
25 the HBO and the field of economics.
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42 I don't have to earn a lot of money as long as I have a normal life. I mean children can be very
43 difficult but what you get back for it is really too valuable to miss. So I want that also for
44 myself and I want to enjoy every minute of it, that is why I want to work with a standard
45 pattern. So that's my plan: to have a job, to have a wife, children, a home, and then life is
46 complete. [23, male, university, economics]
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53 The notion of nine-to-five was clearly present in the narratives of young people
54 when talking about the higher education choice. Only Serhat, who graduated in
55 aerospace engineering, defined himself as being an outlier while embarking on the route
56 of self-realization and not going for a nine-to-five career like most of his peers.
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3 If you have higher educational level, you are just thinking in a different way, because you are
4 trying to follow your interest, you are challenging yourself – you are not looking forward to
5 have a manager who tells you to do this and that, you know you are not looking for a job
6 which is from nine-to-five.
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10
11 Serhat's strive for self-realisation would indicate a post-materialist way of
12 thinking which reminds us of the subjective nature of insecurity. Still, Serhat is more of
13 an outlier in the sense that he spoke openly about the importance of making money as
14 the base level of any higher education choice.
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21
22 Ibrahim, an MA student in chemistry, took a contrasting point of view and was
23 very vocal when regretting his choice of going to university. Having studied chemistry
24 at university level he was reluctant to consider a career in research. Rather, he was
25 longing for a nine-to-five career he could not possibly have in his chosen field.
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32 I just want a normal life, my work is not my life, my work is only part of my life and that is
33 why I have regrets. If I had chosen economics then I would have worked at a normal
34 company, from nine to five.
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39 The annotation suggests that some second generation Turks simply might have
40 'travelled' too far from their starting point and became scared when seeing its
41 consequences. Not only were these young people moving from one stage of education to
42 another but also from one class to another. While wanting to leave the life of their elders
43 because they were filled with struggles they discovered new struggles for themselves.
44 The career of a researcher, which Ibrahim pictures in terms of high competition,
45 pressure and endless lab hours not allowing him to spend enough time with his family,
46 in many ways resembles his parents' job history which he originally aimed to avoid.
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59 I don't feel that [research] is my thing. Back at the time at VWO I was above average but
60 now I am average student. So when first all the 'geniuses' get a good scholarship I might get

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2
3 a lousy research project. And I don't want that, I don't. I am tired of competing all the time,
4
5 I don't want to compete anymore; I just want a normal, regular life.
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8 While student narratives clearly indicated that Turkish families settled in
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10 Holland begun to put education first (before marriage) on their list of priorities (Pásztor
11
12 2010) apparently they did so only to satisfy their need for job - and financial – security.
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14 Thus education didn't really become an end in itself but a means to an end for second
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16 generation Turks; namely to enable them to offer more in terms of material comfort and
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18 parental attention to their children and family.
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22 23 24 25 **Conclusion**

26
27 The study makes a significant contribution to the debate on ethnic minority choices in
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29 showing how the limitations imposed upon accessing different types of HE institutions
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31 intertwine with intergenerational aspirations and expectations of Turks living in
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33 Holland. Here, the strong parental and community pressure towards degrees in
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35 medicine and law is counterbalanced by the lack of access to universities which are the
36
37 sole providers of such prestigious courses in the receiving society. Thus not having
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39 access to university education is one of the reasons behind the differences in subject
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41 choices, forcing many Turkish students to adjust their list of preferences with courses
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43 accessible at professional colleges only. Here, economics or business comes up as a
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45 generally appealing alternative which earns parental approval based on the relatively
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47 good labour market return of this education within the Dutch economy.
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53 However, this is not the sole reason behind the mass numbers of students in the
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55 field of business. The research points to the so far neglected aspect of 'job
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57 compatibility' which plays a significant role in their decision making. While their final
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59 aim is a 'good job' to be ensured by a degree in business, it is not – only – the potential
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3 income or social security which pulls students towards this choice. Offering a
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5 seemingly *perfect* balance of work and family life, in line with the notion of nine-to-
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7 five, is what fits so well with the imagined futures of Turkish young people in the Dutch
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9 society. Jobs ‘in suits’ in business, government or the banking sector provide a strong
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11 contrast to parental employment experiences, as having to work long hours and doing
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13 dirty and heavy physical work for a minimal wage is clearly not how the children of
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15 immigrants imagine their futures. The futures of second generation Turks are not aimed
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17 to centre around their working life but around their families, and economics is the field
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19 with the right attributes to enable their dreams to become a reality within the Dutch
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21 society.
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Ethnic origin	HE entry (%)	Females (%)	University (%)
Native Dutch	54	52	26
Turkey	29	53	16
Morocco	33	56	13
Suriname	42	59	17
Netherlands Antilles and Aruba	36	60	21
Western-migrants (EU)	54	55	32
Average	51	53	21

Table 1. *First time entry into higher education by ethnic origin; 2005 (age cohort: 18-20) (adapted from Jennissen 2007)*

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Notes

¹ Similarly to the former polytechnics in the UK the Dutch HBOs provide higher professional education (in Dutch: hoger beroepsonderwijs). As of 2001 there were 56 government funded HBOs and 13 universities, and 61 private HBOs and 8 private universities in the Dutch higher education system (Marginson et al. 2008).

² VWO (voorbereidend wetenschappelijk onderwijs) is the most selective secondary school track providing pre-university education. HAVO (hoger algemeen voortgezet onderwijs) is a less selective secondary school type offering higher general secondary education (with direct access to HBO but not to university). The MBO (middelbaar beroepsonderwijs) provides vocational training for those coming from the least selective, vocationally oriented secondary school tracks such as the MAVO (middelbaar algemeen voortgezet onderwijs) or the VBO (voorbereidend beroepsonderwijs). The last two types were recently merged into one stream called VMBO (voorbereidend middelbaar beroepsonderwijs). The MBO certificate allows students to access the HBO.

³ Note: economics and business are used interchangeably throughout the paper. They are meant to include all related and sub-fields such as management; marketing; accounting etc.

⁴ More than one third of the total Turkish HBO intake is enrolled into this field, compared to one fifth of the university intake from all areas.

⁵ TIES (The Integration of the European Second Generation) is a survey of second generation Turks, Moroccans, and ex-Yugoslavs across eight European countries including the Netherlands (see www.tiesproject.eu).

⁶ The theory of cognitive dissonance assumes that people have motivational drive to reduce dissonance by changing, justifying or rationalizing their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours (Festinger 1957).